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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 007155

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SUBJECT: MAOISTS UNWILLING TO SHARE, ACCORDING TO INDIAN
THINK-TANK

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Classified By: Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Dr. Ajai Sahni of the Institute for Conflict Management, warned that current peace talks will result in Nepal being handed over to the Maoists, who have no intention of sharing power. The Maoists are tactical negotiators who should not be underestimated, said Sahni. Describing the Maoists as having a coherent military command, he noted that India and the U.S. should study their warfare tactics, the same tactics are in fact being used by Islamic extremists. U.S. or Indian "boots on the ground" in Nepal would be a mistake according to Sahni, who says the Nepalese must take the lead in reclaiming the territory the Maoists now control. END SUMMARY.

Handing the State Over to Maoists?

12. (C) "We're effectively handing the state over to the Maoists," said Dr. Ajai Sahni, a terrorism and conflict resolution expert, at an October 10 meeting with SCA Director for India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives and Bhutan Marcia Bernicat, referring to the international community's

willingness to let the Maoists participate in the Nepalese government. He warned that Maoists are not willing to share power, even though they prefer to enter the formal political process through non-violent means. He opined that the Maoists appeal to the dispossessed, having effectively moved into the vacuum left by an unpopular King and ineffective government. While the international community and GON get "caught up in the detail of a complex peace process," the Maoists are left to build support at the grassroots level, he said. The Maoists are "tactical" rather than "good faith" negotiators who will abandon the process once they have power.

Terror Wins Through Our Surrender

¶3. (C) "Terror wins through our surrender, our failure of will," Sahni concluded, predicting that a slow decline in the peace process will be marked by escalating violence and sporadic demonstrations, but noted that this time protests will be against the democratic government as opposed to those against the King last April. "At some stage, someone will give up," he said, noting that violence is intended by the Maoists to further their objectives and that their military commands are coherent and underestimated by the GOI and U.S. The NNA is still popular, but is demoralized and able only to fight for and hold Kathmandu, not the entire country, according to Sahni.

Studying Maoism

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¶4. (C) Sahni believes it is necessary to study Maoism to understand the Maoists' strategy of warfare, and intimated that Islamic extremists have also successfully adopted the tactics of Mao. "A Maoist doesn't separate fighting from politics," he said. He feels that the conflict in Nepal could be overcome if there were a coherent strategy of regaining control "in the field," but says that right now anti-Maoist forces are lacking in strength, presence and effectiveness. "The worst thing possible would be Indian or U.S. boots on the ground, however," he said, noting that this ground must be gained by the Nepalese themselves.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) We find that Sahni's analysis is a minority report among Nepal-watchers in India. While most are pushing for the peace process to continue, Sahni believes that such processes "resolve only one or two problems, but ultimately do nothing other than demonstrate that terrorism works." While many in India believe that the Maoists can be trusted to take part in a Nepalese democracy, Sahni articulated an "all or nothing" end-game in Nepal's future that reminds us, at a minimum, not to underestimate the Maoists. END COMMENT.
PYATT